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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAMAKO 000867

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SUBJECT: ALGERIAN AMBASSADOR'S VIEW OF SECURITY SUMMIT AND
ALGIERS ACCORDS

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Classified By: Ambassador Gillian Milovanovic for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

1.(C) Summary: During Ambassador Milovanovic's introductory call, Algerian Ambassador Abdelkarim Gueraieb shared his view of President Amadou Toumani Toure's oft-postponed Head of State security summit and the Algiers Accords implementation process. Gueraieb has a central role in ongoing peace negotiations with Tuareg rebels. Before discussing his views of present day Mali, however, Gueraieb recounted his role as a mediator during the 1979-1981 hostage crisis in Tehran. Gueraieb said his efforts to resolve the crisis, and subsequent trip to Camp David to meet with President Carter and the families of imprisoned American diplomats, shaped his deep personal affection for the United States. Turning to the topic of President Toure, Gueraieb complained that Toure says "yes" to whoever is sitting in front of him. He said that President Toure's Head of State conference had been postponed once again due to scheduling conflicts with Libyan leader Mouammar Qadhafi and Algerian opposition to Mauritanian involvement. Gueraieb said the Summit was now tentatively scheduled for November. He added Algiers insists on there being a Foreign Ministers, meeting first to prepare the summit. Gueraieb was relatively optimistic about progress toward implementing the Algiers Accords. End Summary.

Flashback to Tehran 1979

2.(C) During an introductory meeting with Ambassador Milovanovic on October 30, Algerian Ambassador Gueraieb described his role as a mediator during the Tehran hostage crisis of 1979-81. Gueraieb said he became friendly with Ayatollah Khomeini while the two were living in France in 1978. Upon his return to Iran in 1979, Khomeini sent a message to Algeria asking for Gueraieb's assistance. Algeria responded by sending Gueraieb to Tehran as Ambassador, where he became involved in the hostage crisis and served as a go-between for American and Iranian officials. Gueraieb said he arranged for a French Monsignor living in Algeria to say mass for the American hostages during their first Christmas in captivity in 1979. For Christmas 1980 Gueraieb said he arranged, at President Carter's request, to visit each of the hostages to check on their condition. These visits occurred at three different locations, including the basement of the Iranian Foreign Ministry, and permitted Gueraieb to take photographs with each hostage and receive letters addressed to family members in the U.S. After meeting with all of the hostages, Gueraieb said he traveled to Camp David to meet President Carter and the hostages' families. Gueraieb noted

that Algerians have a particular affection for the U.S. dating back to Algerian independence and the Kennedy administration, but that his affection is much deeper and was shaped by his personal involvement with the American government and American hostages while Ambassador to Iran.

View of President Toure

3.(C) Returning to 2008, Gueraieb complained that President Toure's need for consensus leads him to agree with whomever is sitting in front of him. This, Gueraieb continued, often leads to conflicting commitments and non-decisions. Gueraieb said President Toure's unwillingness to say "no" and desire to please everyone explains why Toure is often unable to follow through on promises to Algeria and other nations.

Head of State Summit Scheduling Woes

4.(C) President Toure's oft-postponed Head of State summit on Sahel-Saharan security is now tentatively scheduled for mid-November. A brief meeting of Foreign Ministers from the region will convene in Bamako one or two days before the summit. The actual summit date, however, remains uncertain due to scheduling conflicts and confusion over Mauritania's level of involvement or lack thereof. Gueraieb told the Ambassador that the summit was previously scheduled first for October 27 and then for November 5. However, Gueraieb said he met President Toure within the past week to ten days and learned that November 5 presented a scheduling conflict for Qadhafi. Algeria apparently favors Libyan participation as Gueraieb noted that President Bouteflika telephoned Qadhafi

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after learning of the Nov. 5 scheduling snafu to help identify an alternate date.

5.(C) Mali apparently formulated two options regarding Mauritanian participation, and Algeria rejected both. The first option involved inviting a lower-level Minister from General Aziz's military junta. Algerian President Bouteflika personally vetoed the second option which was to invite the Mauritanian Ambassador to Mali as a stand-in for the jailed Mauritanian Head of State. The Mauritanian Ambassador, who according to the Algerian Ambassador has been recalled to Mauritania is in any case, to our understanding, a relative of jailed President Abdallahi. According to Gueraieb, Bouteflika refused to sit with an Ambassador at a meeting billed as a Head of State summit. Bouteflika was so irked by this idea that he directed his Foreign Minister, who was traveling in the region anyway, to travel directly to Bamako to deliver the following two-point demarche: point one, only Heads of State will be invited; and point two, no Mauritians.

6.(C) Returning to his earlier theme of President Toure's need to please, Gueraieb said Toure responded positively to the Algerian Foreign Minister's message, saying the idea was a good one and that he agreed completely. Gueraieb said he personally was not yet convinced President Toure had fully dropped the idea of inviting a non-Head of State or a Mauritanian representative. He observed that only President Toure knows what Mali has in mind as far as the summit is concerned and that even well-placed presidential insiders are uninformed. Gueraieb said there had been a considerable amount of misunderstanding about the size and purpose of the summit, and that Algeria envisioned a summit primarily for regional actors - although there was certainly no intention of excluding the U.S. or other key partners. He said a committee was already working on the text of a "Bamako Declaration" and an action plan intended as summit take-aways.

7.(C) As if on cue, Gueraieb then fielded a call from the

Malian Foreign Minister, Moctar Ouane, and conducted the conversation in Ambassador Milovanovic's presence. Ouane told Gueraieb that he had been instructed to contact Presidents in the region to fix a date for the summit but had been unable to reach anyone in Chad because lines of communication were down. Using the familiar "tu" form of address, Gueraieb directed Ouane to continue trying to reach Chad and reiterated Ouane's marching orders, reminding Ouane to call up each Head of State, fix a firm date for the summit, and also arrange a meeting of Foreign Ministers one day before the actual summit.

Algeria Not Pessimistic About Accords Implementation

8.(C) The Algerian Ambassador spoke briefly about the progress of Algiers Accords implementation, expressing guarded optimism about the Accords' future. He said Algeria was currently focused on provisions for the reinsertion of former rebel combatants and the creation of mixed military units. He noted that Algeria had set aside approximately USD 2 million (reftel) for vocational training and other programs to rehabilitate Tuareg rebels but that the money remained untouched. Gueraieb said that while he believes it is possible to keep the various Tuareg rebel factions and their leaders in check, there is no permanent fix to the problem in northern Mali.

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